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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 DJIBOUTI 000200

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STATE FOR AF, AF/E; LONDON, PARIS FOR AFRICA WATCHER

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SUBJECT: ACTING FOREIGN MINISTER ON FRANCO-DJIBOUTIAN
RELATIONS AND BORREL AFFAIR

Classified By: Ambassador Marguerita D. Ragsdale.
For reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

1. (C) Summary: Ambassador met with Acting Foreign Minister, Mahamoud Ali Youssouf, at her request February 23 to discuss several issues, among them the effect of the Borrel Affair on France-Djibouti relations. Youssouf called the affair embarrassing for both sides. He said it is not Djibouti's desire to see the situation escalate, but it is now a matter of principle as France's government could do much more than it currently is doing to tamp down tensions. Youssouf said the French judges need to either prove the allegations raised or close the case. End Summary.

2. (C) Youssouf described the Borrel case as a completely French issue. He continued that from the beginning of the affair everything had involved French authorities. The discovery of Borrel's body was by French military, the autopsy by French doctors, the judicial inquiry by French judges and the conclusion of suicide by French courts. Youssouf said it was only after two persons then in Brussels came forward with overheard conversations allegedly implicating Djiboutian authorities that Borrel's widow started to say that there were confidential files at French intelligence confirming the same.

3. (C) Youssouf said the Government of Djibouti requested in August 2003 that the supposed intelligence files be declassified. The French authorities did and nothing in the documents pointed to Djiboutian authorities being involved in the death of Judge Borrel. Youssouf said it was afterwards that the judges' syndicate in France started putting pressure on the government to take a different stance. According to Youssouf, the French government had been taken hostage by the French judiciary. Because the file cannot be closed, it has become a political issue for both countries. He added his belief that if the courts had evidence implicating Djiboutian authorities, it would have already brought that evidence forward.

4. (C) Regarding the reasons behind the Government of Djibouti's recent expulsions of six French Cooperation employees, Youssouf explained that Djibouti does not think the French government is complicit in widow Borrel's pressure, but it is also not doing anything to prevent damaging slander against Djibouti and Djibouti's President. He continued that Radio France International (RFI) is French government owned and as such, can be controlled by France. Yet it had continued to broadcast slanderous statements on purpose. He said Djibouti had told the French to stop, but they didn't. Youssouf also said Djibouti objected to the summons of Djiboutian officials to appear in a French court to testify in the Borrel case. He added that when Djibouti had protested that the two accusers who had made false accusations against the President of Djibouti were only doing so in order to keep refugee status and asked that they be tried in France, the French refused to cooperate. Youssouf said Djibouti's response to the request of the French courts is "if we help you, you have to help us." He said Djibouti has to deal with its accusers through the French and cannot accept the excuse that separation of powers prevents France from stopping harassment.

5. (C) Youssouf said Djibouti's position is that since the entire investigative process in the Borrel affair had been handled by the French, why implicate Djibouti now? He added that rumors indicated that Borrel worked for French intelligence and that the declassified documents indicated Borrel was dirty. Youssouf said the Borrel affair is a 100 percent French problem, but it happened in Djibouti. Youssouf noted that Djibouti has hundreds of French assistants in the various ministries with access to sensitive information. Why would Djibouti kill one assistant and allow the others to live?

6. (C) Regarding rumors that more French workers might be asked to leave, Youssouf stated pointedly that "it depended on the developments in the affair." He said if the French government takes its responsibility, Djibouti will not be forced to act against it. He continued that Djibouti is asking France to put forward additional information, if any, or close the file. Youssouf commented that the French

Ambassador to Djibouti was very clear that France is as much embarrassed as Djibouti, but it was not in a position to pressure the judicial system. Youssouf said that he responded that France needed to pressure the media, not the judiciary. In Youssouf's view, the case should be closed since ten years had passed since Borrel's death and there is no proof of murder. In order to keep the case open, he said, murder must be proved, a motive for murder found, and the perpetrator determined. Youssouf repeated "it is not in our interest to escalate the issue, but it is a matter of principle - prove it or close it."

RAGSDALE